



Milwaukee County

Board of Supervisors

November 10, 2006

For Immediate Release

Contact: Harold Mester, Public Information Manager 414/278-4051

harold.mester@milwcnty.com

"IF YOU CARE ABOUT TAXES, YOU HAVE TO CARE ABOUT HEALTH CARE COSTS"

Employee health care is the single biggest driver of increased taxes in County Budget

Milwaukee, WI – Employee health care costs are increasing faster than any other segment of County spending. In adopting the 2007 County Budget Monday, the Board took steps to control these spiraling costs.

"It's unfortunate that the same people who demand lower taxes say nothing about the cost of health care. And that drives local taxes up," Quindel said. "If you care about taxes, you have to care about health care costs. Southeastern Wisconsin is among the highest in the country."

The Board voted unanimously to create a new division dedicated to getting a handle on skyrocketing health care benefit costs. The centerpiece of the plan is a newly created position of Director of Employee Benefits, within the Department of Administrative Services.

The plan is a new model developed by Board Chairman Lee Holloway that will transform the way the County manages its nearly \$200 million in fringe benefits. "Employee health care is the largest growing segment of the County Budget," Holloway said. "It needs its own singular focus to bring health costs down and improve the County's financial picture."

The plan also includes the creation of a Health Benefits Advisory Committee. Supervisor Quindel is expected to be named Chairman of that Committee. "The County Board is doing the best it can to control health care costs," Quindel said. "But until we get the cooperation of all elected officials and the private sector to bring our costs closer to the Midwest average, we're in an extremely difficult situation."

The County is still waiting for one union, AFSCME, to agree to a wage and benefit proposal that has been submitted to them. It's a plan already approved for other union and non-union employees, as well as retirees. Without that agreement, AFSCME employees will continue to pay less for health care coverage than other union and non-union employees.

The County Board will vote on any vetoes from the County Executive on Wednesday, November 15th, 1:30pm, in Room 200 of the Milwaukee County Courthouse.